

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 14, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles Schumer
United States Senate

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Minority Leaders McCarthy and Schumer,

Thank you, again, for providing parity, in many respects, for the U.S. insular areas in legislation already enacted to stop the coronavirus and revive America's economy.

Congress needs to do more, however, as you well understand. We ask that parity for the insular areas remain a guiding principle and make the following recommendations for legislative actions that would be of particular importance to the areas we represent.

1. Aid to education.

We support an increase of \$19.75 billion to the Education Stabilization Fund established in Section 18001 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act. Total funding would then be \$50 billion, as proposed in the Take Responsibility for Workers and Families Act, H.R. 6379.

The allocation for "outlying areas" in §18001(1) should be amended to read:

"(1) 1/2 of 1 percent to the outlying areas in an amount in proportion to the amount received by each outlying area under part A of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311 et seq.) for the previous fiscal year relative to the total such amount received by all outlying areas for such previous fiscal year, to support the ability of local educational agencies and institutions of higher education to continue to provide educational services to their students;"

2. Infrastructure.

Although the insular areas generally lag the rest of our nation in quality and adequacy of public infrastructure, there are four areas of particular deficiency, which should be addressed in any national-wide rebuilding effort:

- a. **Water and wastewater systems.** We now understand the risk of pandemic, as never before, and the need for infrastructure that can protect the public health from disease and the spread of disease. Therefore, we support funding of \$50.5 billion for these purposes, as proposed in the Moving Forward Framework, which is based on the Environmental Protection Agency's 2015 Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey and Assessment.

That 2015 Assessment identified the need in the areas we represent as \$1.006 billion. To fully cover that cost, we propose a set-aside of two percent for our areas, the same percentage as is typically provided for American Indian and Alaska Native Village water systems in Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Act appropriations.

Again, without potable water to all households and tertiary treatment of all wastewater public health in the insular areas will always be at risk.

b. Schools. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Insular Schools Assessment of Building and Classrooms found \$177 million in deferred maintenance needs in our island schools seven years ago. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely limited the territories' ability to address these needs and protect students' health, safety and access to quality education. Therefore, we support the inclusion of funding for these purposes as proposed in H.R. 865, the Rebuild America's Schools Act, which the Education and Labor Committee passed last year.

3. Healthcare resilience.

Insular areas were excluded from the full coverage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010 because of cost concerns. In hindsight, leaving millions of Americans without access to affordable health insurance has left those individuals without the means to obtain testing and treatment in a pandemic and, also, undermined the capacity of insular area healthcare systems to prepare for and respond to a public health crisis. We, therefore, request full inclusion of the insular areas in the Affordable Care Act.

In addition, in order to ensure there is adequate funding to address the healthcare demands of the coronavirus and otherwise assure future resilience of healthcare, we also request the current limitation on Medicaid payments that applies to our districts (42 U.S.C. 1308) be repealed. We have today introduced H.R. 6495 to accomplish that goal and ask that the legislation be added to the next package of coronavirus relief measures.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLÁN
Member of Congress



MICHAEL SAN NICOLAS
Member of Congress



AUMUA AMATA COLEMAN
RADEWAGEN
Member of Congress

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cc: The Honorable Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader
 The Honorable James Clyburn, Majority Whip
 The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries, Chair – Democratic Caucus
 The Honorable Nita Lowey, Chair – Appropriations Committee
 The Honorable Robert C. Scott, Chair – Education and Labor Committee
 The Honorable Frank Pallone, Chair – Energy and Commerce Committee
 The Honorable Maxine Waters, Chair – Financial Services Committee
 The Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Chair – Natural Resources Committee
 The Honorable Nydia Velázquez, Chair – Small Business Committee
 The Honorable Peter DeFazio, Chair – Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
 The Honorable Richard Neal, Chair – Ways and Means Committee